



A call to **Action**

A NATIONAL
AGENDA FOR
URBAN PARKS
AND RECREATION
IN AMERICA

Preamble

When a nation abandons a tradition that has served it well, adopts a course that ignores what its citizens value most, allows indifference to a cherished part of its heritage, and diminishes the ways we can make a difference in the lives of Americans – then it is time to act.

THAT IS WHY WE GATHER TODAY.

Urban parks enrich our lives. They educate, protect, and enrich America's young people. They provide places to play after school and during summer vacations, and give individuals and families countless hours of recreation and relaxation.

Parks produce clean air and protect cities from floodwaters. They help to increase property value, grow the local tax base, contribute to education, reduce crime, attract businesses, and create jobs.

We who administer thousands of acres of urban parkland for millions of people gather here today as representatives of the 100 largest urban park and recreation systems in America to make public our call to action to reverse the neglect of our nation's cherished urban parks.

We believe a national renaissance for America's urban parks must arise from a new compact between federal, state, and city governments, joined by citizen groups, private foundations, and businesses.

We believe the solution must come from a variety of approaches and funding sources that address the

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need for accessibility to and from parks; for the education and recreation programs within parks; for health promotion and opportunities for physical activity by those who use parks; and for new, economical ways to maintain parks.

We believe that support for parks and recreation is a uniquely American tradition, and call on the members of Congress and our president to acknowledge through leadership, investment, and action the true value and robust return on investment that quality parks bring to cities and urban communities.

We acknowledge that revitalizing urban parks is not solely the task of the federal government, and call upon every level of government – from cities to state legislatures – to match the federal investment dollar for dollar.

We know that such an investment will pay enormous dividends, and we know that the consequences of delaying this investment will mean higher costs in the future.

We who sign this call to action ask mayors, county executives, state legislators, members of Congress, and our president to join with us so that all Americans can benefit from urban parks and recreation in the years ahead.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles and pillars form the underlying philosophy held by the original creators and stewards of our urban parks – and they guide us still today:

- Urban parks and recreation promote health and wellness
- Urban parks and recreation stimulate community and economic development
- Urban parks protect the environment
- Urban parks educate, protect, and enrich America's young people

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Because we stand for the values of urban parks and recreation;

Because we see the costs of inaction each day;

Because we know that Americans want a return to the support government has traditionally provided for urban parks and recreation in America;

We urge Congress, our president, states and cities to join in our call to action to re-invest, re-build, and revitalize urban parks and recreation resources in America.

We call on Congress and our president to make available \$1 billion dollars over the next three years for urban parks and recreation in new and recurring federal funding that will be matched dollar for dollar in funds and in-kind contributions by cities and states.

Together, we will take the following steps to accomplish our goals, provide leadership to our cities, and secure the matching investments to rebuild our urban parks and recreation resources. While local needs and conditions vary widely, we seek these actions in support of the four principles that guide our call to action, and encourage citizens and government at every level to take meaningful actions to demonstrate support for the National Agenda for Urban Parks and Recreation in America.

PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Because park and recreation agencies are essential to the effort to fulfill national goals for promoting health and wellness, preventing obesity, and addressing prevention of chronic disease, we ask:

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At the federal level:

- That Congress and the president support sufficient appropriations for
 - » CDC's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity
 - » Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP)
 - » Rehabilitative Services Administration's recreational program grants
 - » Expansion of the Simplified Summer Food Service Program to all 50 states
 - » Steps-to-a-Healthier U.S. program
 - » Preventive Health Services Block Grant program
- That Congress and the president work to pass the:
 - » Improved Nutrition and Physical Activity Act
 - » Healthy Places Act
 - » Prevention of Childhood Obesity Act
 - » Urban and Rural Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Act
- That Congress and the president work to recognize local park and recreation agencies as eligible entities for federal matching grants promoting health and wellness.

At the state level:

- That states seek the fullest cooperation between state agencies and local governments to promote health and wellness in cooperation with urban park and recreation departments and cities.
- That states work with cities to create specific park and recreation-sponsored anti-obesity programs for local communities.

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At the local level:

- That local park and recreation agencies take a leadership role in creating anti-obesity and health promotion programs for all members of the community, including prevention programs for individuals with disabilities.
- That park and recreation agencies seek better cooperation with state and federal agencies to address community needs for urban parks in promoting health, wellness, and public safety.

STIMULATING COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Because the evidence is overwhelming that matching grant funds act as economic catalysts, providing returns that far exceed the original appropriations, we ask:

At the federal level:

- That Congress and the president strengthen and sustain the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.
- That Congress and the president jointly commit to restoring sufficient and sustainable funding for a revitalized Urban Park and Recreation Recovery program (UPARR) so that urban communities may once again obtain direct federal assistance for planning, rehabilitation, and repair of critically needed parks and recreation facilities.
- That Congress and the president support the federal role in providing matching investments and technical assistance for urban communities, emphasizing alternative and non-motorized transportation networks, inter-connected bike-pedestrian trail systems to parks and recreation areas, safe routes to and from schools, and multi-modal trails on public lands.

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- That cities and states monitor rescissions of federal transportation funding in the Safe, Accountable, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), working to prevent disproportionate cuts to bicycle, pedestrian, air quality, and trail programs

At the state level:

- That state agencies and cities work to ensure that urban parks become a true destination for visitors and tourists as well as residents.
- That states direct economic development programs and heritage tourism agencies to work more closely with cities to promote the true economic benefits that accrue from urban parks, festivals, heritage events, and similar recreation activities.
- That states support cities and urban park and recreation agencies in promoting safe and healthy access to local and urban parks, recognizing the true economic values to communities from increased private property values and economic development that results from quality urban parks.

At the local level:

- That cities and urban park and recreation agencies engage in new partnerships to map assets, encourage private sector involvement with urban parks, and ensure equitable distribution of resources with knowledge that true economic benefits flow from a quality urban park and recreation system.

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PROTECTING THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Because federal investments have been so effective in protecting open space and providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans in urban areas, we ask:

At the federal level:

- That Congress and the president jointly commit to restoring sufficient and sustainable funding to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LCWF) state assistance program, the most valuable cooperative conservation program in American history, which has aided 40,000 local and state park and recreation projects in the 40-year history of the program.
- That Congress and the president work to provide sufficient sustainable funding for states and localities in programs that help ensure long-term protection of land and natural resources in cities and urban counties, including support for the:
 - » Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation program
 - » USDA Forest Legacy Program, and
 - » Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program

At the state level:

- That states look to create sustainable, reliable funding sources to enhance urban parks, and assist cities and urban counties in acquiring, planning, maintaining, and operating urban parks to the highest standards of environmental stewardship.
- That states involve cities and communities in exercising state-level responsibilities for maintaining and improving environmental quality in urban parks, including the health of urban forests; protection of clean water and healthy, breathable

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air; protection from floods and storm water; protection of groundwater resources; and other indicators of environmental quality and livability.

At the local level:

- That cities commit their urban park systems to protect the environmental quality of the urban environment by acquiring and protecting flood-prone areas, protecting wetlands and watersheds, maintaining and increasing healthy urban forests, and protecting wildlife and natural resources.

EDUCATING, ENRICHING, AND PROTECTING AMERICA'S YOUTH

Because early intervention is so clearly the most successful way to help children at risk we ask:

At the federal level:

- That Congress and the president support sufficient and reliable appropriations for those programs that address youth development, including:
 - » Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Grants
 - » 21st Century Community Learning Centers
 - » Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBG)
 - » Helping America's Youth Initiative, and
 - » Other programs that protect, educate, and enrich the lives of youth in urban communities.
- That Congress and the president support a new program to develop more opportunities for youth sports activities, youth mentoring in park and recreation settings, increased partnerships, and better use of volunteers to educate and enrich youth in safe, healthful, recreational activities and sports.

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At the state level:

- That states commit to fully assisting cities and urban park and recreation agencies in providing adequate and appropriate food and nutrition services; child care; before-school and after-school care; and therapeutic recreation programs in urban park settings, recreation programs, and community centers.
- That states commit to a greater role in partnering with federal agencies and cities in creating new opportunities for youth sports, youth mentoring, and partnerships with organizations, businesses and community groups.

At the local level:

- That cities and urban park and recreation agencies redouble efforts to encourage youth to use urban parks and participate in safe, healthful recreational programs and activities.
- That cities and urban park and recreation agencies creatively utilize new technologies to better engage and involve youth so that they come to value the experiences of safe, healthful, and fun outdoor recreation and physical activity.
- That cities and urban park and recreation agencies recognize that the fundamental value of building a healthy community begins with youth, and that agencies encourage volunteers, business partners, community and faith-based organizations, and all segments of the urban community to engage youth.



promote

stimulate

protect

educate

enrich



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